United Nations A/56/185–S/2001/699

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
16 July 2001
English
Original: Arabic

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session
Items 53 and 99 of the provisional agenda*

Security Council
Fifty-sixth year

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Letter dated 16 July 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

It saddens me to have to convey to you the alarming statements made by Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel, on 10 July 2001 concerning the expansion of Israeli settlement activity in the territory of the occupied Syrian Golan.

At the dedication of a centre for studies at the Katzrin settlement in the Golan, Sharon said that developing the Golan, increasing the Jewish population and bringing in new residents would alone be capable of transforming settlement in the Golan into an irreversible reality. Sharon characterized Israeli settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan as one of the most beautiful achievements and successes in the history of Zionism.

News agencies have also reported that the Israeli Government has announced the opening of bidding for the construction of 100 dwellings and 220 tourist cabins in the occupied Syrian Golan. This announcement was made in the context of a methodical Israeli plan that has been in place since the occupation of the Golan in 1967 and has the goal of taking possession of all the land in order to build new settlements, expand the existing colonies and bring in more settlers so as to make the settlement of the Golan a fait accompli, as was acknowledged by Ariel Sharon in the statements indicated above.

The General Assembly has condemned the Israeli policies and practices of settlement, annexation and Golan. The occupation, and it does so in the resolutions it adopts every year on the occupied Syrian most recent of these are resolutions 55/51 and 55/134, in which the Assembly expresses the position of the international community in rejecting these practices. In its resolution 497 (1981) the Security

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Council rejects Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan and decides that it is null and void and without international legal effect.

The Israeli practices in question indicate unprecedented defiance of the Charter of the United Nations, of the relevant resolutions of the Organization, of the supremacy of international law and international humanitarian law, and of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which regards settlement activity as a war crime.

As is acknowledged by the international community, the Syrian Arab Republic has made every possible effort for the success of the peace process in the Middle East based on the terms of reference of the Madrid peace conference, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. It affirms that the occupied Golan is Syrian territory that cannot be relinquished and that Israel is required by the resolutions that embody international legitimacy to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. Syria regards the Israeli position as stated by Sharon, namely that Israel will continue to build and expand its colonies in the occupied Arab territories, as another dangerous escalation of the situation in the region and as proof that Sharon's Government has decided to kill the peace process and to bury the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Syrian Arab Republic has been committed to striving for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and it affirms that Israel's continued defiance of the will of the international community, international legitimacy and the resolutions of the United Nations will lead to a dangerous escalation of the situation in the region. The Syrian Arab Republic requests the Secretary-General to use his authority under the Charter to take the necessary measures to induce Israel to halt forthwith its settlement activities in the Golan in accordance with the aforesaid resolution 497 (1981).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 53 and 99 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.